

Testimony of Lindy Hennessy
S.B. No. 1096 *An Act Concerning Charter Schools*

Good evening Senator Slossberg, Representative Fleischmann, and members of the Education Committee. My name is Lindy Hennessy. My husband, Representative Jack Hennessy, and I are proud parents of a student who attends Common Ground High School, a charter school located in New Haven.

Common Ground's staff works tirelessly to create a family atmosphere where each student is provided with a unique and meaningful learning experience. The school has given our daughter, Meisha, a love of learning that we hope will stay with her throughout her life. We are lucky we're able to send her to such an amazing school.

But luck should not be a factor that determines whether or not a student receives an education that works for them. Despite overwhelming demand, students that are struggling and need school options are asked to cross their fingers and hope a lottery number grants them a life-changing opportunity. Is that the best that we can do?

Years ago, my husband and I waited tables to make a living. We were fortunate enough to move from a life of minimum wage to one of opportunity. Now, I am able to drive our daughter from Bridgeport to New Haven every day so she can attend a school she loves. So many parents and guardians do not share our fortune. Our State constantly tells its low-income citizens where they can live, what jobs they can get, and what can they afford.

And now, after years of limiting the choices of hardworking parents, Connecticut is limiting the opportunities of its children. All children in Connecticut deserve a school that meets their needs. Please do not take that away from them.

I understand Connecticut's current financial situation. And I do not envy your challenging position. But I also understand how parents of the thousands of children on waitlists for schools of choice feel, my own children had been on a wait list in Bridgeport. Their parents have been told to wait until next year, wait until next budget season, wait for a miracle.

As a State, we have not always responded to the needs of our low-income citizens. Let us not make the same mistakes with our children. The proposed moratorium ignores the parents who are demonstrating a clear need for more choice schools. Let's right our past wrongs by providing every child with an amazing educational experience.

Thank you for your time and for listening to my testimony.